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Fall 2015

SOC 6784

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University of New Orleans

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Recommended Citation

Compton, D'Lane, "SOC 6784" (2015). *University of New Orleans Syllabi*. Paper 971.
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Sociology 6784

Methods of Sociological Investigation

Fall 2015

Instructor: D’Lane Compton	Class hours: Tu 6:00-8:40 PM
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Course Description

Methods of Sociological Investigation is a graduate-level sociology course designed to introduce students to basic sociological research techniques, methodologies, and controversies. As such, it is broad in its focus and should be viewed as a modest beginning for budding social scientists. Students will study the logic and theory behind methods, learn about the strengths, weaknesses, and appropriateness of various techniques and methods; and be prepared to critique published research.

Required Texts

Tricks of the Trade, Howard Becker (\$8)

Case Study Research: Design and Methods (4th edition), Robert Yin (\$30)

Survey Research Methods, Floyd J. Fowler (\$40)

Ethnographic Book TBA

Selected Readings will be emailed out to you via your UNO account.

Course Requirements

Attendance and Participation

Students are expected to attend class and participate in discussions. Everyone is expected to contribute to the teaching/learning experience. It is important that you respect the contributions of your classmates. Grades for attendance and participation will be based on the following guidelines: A = no absences and frequent meaningful contributions, B = up to 2 absences and regular contributions, C = 4 absences and occasional contributions, D = 5+ absences and sporadic contributions, F = 5+ absences and/or no contribution. Attendance and participation is worth 10% of your grade.

Assignments

You will have 5 assignments throughout the semester. However, you are only responsible for submitting 4. This means that you may skip one assignment of your choice. No late papers will be accepted. Assignments will receive a check for a good understanding/application of the reading, Papers that provide a particularly good evaluation/ application will receive a check-plus, while papers that provide a weak understanding/application will receive a check-minus. At the end of the semester, your papers will be graded as follows: check-pluses = A, checks = B, check-minuses = C. Papers are worth 50% of your grade.

Discussant and Talking Points

During the semester, you will be responsible for coming to class read and prepared for scholarly discussion. As such, you are to come to class with “notes,” observations, and questions from your readings. While you may employ your own style and format, I will also provide an example that I have found to be very helpful for class interaction, student understanding, and future aspirations. Throughout the semester on approximately 2-3 occasions you will be asked to be a discussion leader. On these occasions, you will make your talking points available to the class, present summaries of the material, and

develop 3-5 questions to stimulate class discussion. This will be worth 15% of your grade.

Final Project

Your final paper will be a project proposal for an original survey study. This project will mimic the outline of the course, beginning with theory and hypotheses, including your research design and methodology, the construction of your survey instrument, and a concluding section in which you will write about your experience designing your study. In this project, you will make many judgments about what is methodologically appropriate for your study and you will be expected to support and defend your choices throughout the paper. There will be an additional handout that will give further details on the final project.

You can expect your final project to range between 8-10 pages single-spaced. It will account for 25% of your grade.

Grading

Attendance and participation	10%
Discussant	15%
Assignments	50%
<u>Final Project</u>	<u>25%</u>
Total	100%

Academic Dishonesty and Classroom Conduct

As stated in the UNO Student Handbook available at:

<http://www.studentaffairs.uno.edu/accountability.cfm>

“Academic honesty and intellectual integrity are fundamental to the process of learning and to evaluating academic performance. Maintaining such integrity is the responsibility of all members of the University. All faculty members and teaching assistants should encourage and maintain an atmosphere of academic honesty. They should explain to the students the regulations defining academic honesty and the sanctions for violating these regulations.

“However, students must share the responsibility for creating and maintaining an atmosphere of honesty and integrity. Students should be aware that personally completing assigned work is essential to learning. Students who are aware that others in a course are cheating or otherwise committing academic dishonesty have a responsibility to bring the matter to the attention of the course instructor and/or academic unit head, or the Associate Dean. To promote academic integrity, students will assign the following pledge when required by the instructor.”

By submitting work in your name, I assume you are certifying the work as yours and yours alone. I have a zero tolerance for Academic Dishonesty.

Regarding classroom conduct, I support the principle of freedom of expression for both instructors and students. I believe in the rights of instructors to teach and students to learn. Maintenance of these rights requires classroom conditions that do not impede their exercise. Classroom behavior that seriously interferes with either (1) the instructor’s ability to conduct the class or (2) the ability of other students to profit from the instructional program will not be tolerated. An individual engaging in disruptive classroom behavior may be subject to disciplinary action, which occurs through Judicial Review Services.

Students with Disabilities

Students with documented disabilities can seek a variety of accommodations. If you have a disability, you must register with the Office for Disability Services and they will work with you to determine appropriate accommodations. Further information is available at:

http://www.studentaffairs.uno.edu/studentpolicies/policymanual/disabilities_policy.cfm

******* Please no recording (video or audio), duplicating, copying, etc. any materials or lectures from this course without previous permission. *******

Course Outline and Lecture Schedule

[Week 1]

Introduction: Role of Social Research

How do we know?

Me: RR 1

[Week 2]

Section I: Theory and Methodology

Merton

Markovsky, Barry. 1995. "The Structure of Theories," p. 3-24 in *Group Process*, ed. By Martha Fosci and Edward J. Lawler.

Lee Freese. 1980. "The Problem of Cumulative Knowledge," Pp. 13-69 in Lee Freese (ed.), *Theoretical Methods in Sociology: Seven Essays*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press.

Becker, Chapter 1: Tricks

Me: RR 2, Lieberman Ch. 1,2

Discussants:

Assignment 1 Due:

[Week 3-4]

Section II: Conceptualization and Measurement

Durkheim, Rules of Sociology

Blumer, Herbert. 1956. *Sociological Analysis of The 'Variable.'* American Sociological Review, December: 683-690.

Walker and Cohen, 1985

Becker 2, 4

Discussants:

Me: RR 3,4 Lieberman, Chapter 3, 4, 5

Assignment 2 Due:

[Week 5]

Section III: Experiments, Vignettes, and Ethics

Webster, Murray Jr. and Jane Sell. 2006. "Experimentation and Theory." *The Handbook of Social Science Methodology*, ed. Stephen Turner and William Outhwaite. Sage Pubs.

Sears, D. O., 1986. "College Sophomores in the Laboratory." *JPSP*. 51: 515-530.

Jeffrey W. Lucas. 2003. "Theory-Testing, Generalization, and the Problems of External Validity," *Sociological Theory* 21: 236-253.

Lobster Article

Me: RR 6

Discussants:

FP: Turn in a description of you hypotheses/theory as well references for any articles, etc. from

which you got your idea.

[Week 6-8]

Section V: Case Studies, Content Analysis and Secondary Data Analysis

Yin

Your Ex.

Medley-Rath, “Am I Still a Virgin?”

Newspaper and Crime

Courtship Ads

Discussants:

Assignment 3 Due:

[Week 9] Winter Break No class on October 16th

[Week 10-12]

Section V: Survey Research

Fowler

Discussants:

Bring survey topic idea to class:

Bring sampling plan and draft of your survey instrument:

Assignment 4 Due:

[Week 13-14]

Section VI: Ethnography [Class picks]

Ethnography—Tristan, CJ, Mignon, Tey

Auto-ethnography – Ocampo

Paying for the Party

Invisible Families

Discussants:

Assignment 5 Due:

Me: RR 9

FP: Turn in a description of your data analysis plan

[Week 15-16]

Section VII: Assessing Research and Your Applications

Becker, 6

Trouble Shooting, Crowd Sourcing

Me: Lieberman, Chapter 7, 8, 11

Final Projects Due: _____